

VZCZCXRO1396  
PP RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHNEH  
DE RUEHNE #0128/01 0211248  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 211248Z JAN 09  
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5119  
INFO RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RHHJJPI/PACOM IDHS HONOLULU HI  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 1492  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 4193  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 3432  
RUEHNEH/AMCONSUL HYDERABAD 0165  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1883  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 5728  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 2333  
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 9271  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 3255  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 5856  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 7520  
RHOVVKG/COMSEVENTHFLT  
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 09 NEW DELHI 000128

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NP, AC, PM

STATE FOR INR/MR

STATE FOR SCA/INS, PM/CBM, PM/PRO

STATE FOR SCA/PPD, PA/RRU

STATE FOR AID/APRE-A

USDOC FOR 4530/IEP/ANESA/OSA FOR BILL MURPHY

E.O. 12958:N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: SPECIAL MEDIA REACTION: PRESIDENTIAL  
INAUGURATION/NEW ADMINISTRATION'S FOREIGN POLICY  
(Continued)

This cable reports on relevant media reaction from  
India's English and large non-English press.

SUMMARY: President Obama's inauguration event received  
unprecedented media coverage in India, and it is  
continuing. All newspapers published the President's  
speech, complete or in parts. Reports also highlighted  
that Vice President Joe Biden is a close friend of India.  
The commentary is highly positive, with great  
expectations for change. The general refrain is that the  
new President will have to act fast with so many problems  
that he has inherited. The Urdu press, reflecting Muslim  
opinion in India, welcomed the change of guard, and  
hailed it as a good development for world peace.  
Commentary from India's leading English and language  
newspapers follows. END SUMMARY.

101. "MORNING, MR PRESIDENT," editorial in the January 21  
centrist English daily THE TIMES OF INDIA. "Undoubtedly,  
the gloomy economy will consume much of the new  
president's energies and he has so far shown signs of  
clear thinking on how to get America up on its feet  
again. Equally tough are the assortment of challenges  
that will present themselves on Obama's foreign policy  
plate. One war needs to be wound down responsibly while  
America's attention has to shift to the real battleground  
in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Obama cannot afford to  
engage Pakistan only to tackle al-Qaeda and the Taliban ...  
It is evident that Obama will have to hit the ground  
running. There are soaring expectations which cannot be

all fulfilled. But he has a good base of credibility to start from. Opinion polls show he enjoys close to 80 per cent approval ratings as he picks up the keys to the White House and that the American people, across political divides, are willing to give him a chance and their time. His commitment to consultative governance while being firmly in charge, and the A-list team he has picked, would hopefully serve America and the world well."

¶02. "YES IT'S CHANGE, BUT NO SURPRISES," editorial in the January 21 centrist English daily THE HINDUSTAN TIMES.

"Much of what Obama does in the next few years will build on the second Bush foreign policy - minus the image deficit George W. Bush suffered. There will be differences in emphasis: Obama is more at ease with China, less at ease with Iran and more enthusiastic about a West Asia peace process. Where "change" will be more evident in the new administration will be in economic policy ... Disincentives against outsourcing, a huge diversion of the world's capital to the US economy and protectionism cloaked as climate change are likely components of the US's new external economic policy. Emerging economies should be wary on all counts. There is no reason to detract from the hope and excitement Obama has been able to bring to the global stage. But no one should have any illusions. Obama will be a hard-nosed advocate of US interests in a time of scarcity Change at home can lose much of its positive sheen when it crosses a border."

NEW DELHI 00000128 002 OF 009

¶03. "CHANGE, WITH REALISM," editorial in the January 21 pro-BJP right-of-center English daily THE PIONEER. "Like Reagan, Mr. Obama's charter is beyond just policy reform - it is to design an agenda for American renewal. It is about making appropriate choices, both at home and abroad, that may disturb status quoists but will, in the new President's judgment, serve America well in the coming decades ... Islamism remains a threat to American assets anywhere on the planet. To completely efface the Islamist threat may be beyond Mr. Obama, even if he serves two terms. However, he cannot duck the challenge. Whatever the rhetoric of the election campaign, notwithstanding the claims of the new Secretary of State that "smart diplomacy" - at the best of times, a vague term - will replace a military doctrine, the fact is America cannot abandon the war on terror. To be fair, the new President seems to recognize this."

¶04. "FROM ESTRANGED TO ENGAGED DEMOCRACIES," analysis in the January 21 centrist English daily THE TIMES OF INDIA by political editor Rajeev Deshpande: "For most post-Independence Indians till almost the early 1990s, America remained both a land of gold - the steady brain drain and mushrooming of motels owned by Patels were testimony to the power of the dollar - but also a quasi foe with Russia as India's white knight ... On their part, Americans often saw Indians as unbearably preachy and steeped in a socialist rhetoric that put New Delhi firmly in the Soviet orbit. Yet, US policy towards India has not been uniformly hostile ... Ironically, it was Clinton, who referred to Kashmir as a major trouble spot in his 1993 UN speech, who began realigning America's infamous tilt in south Asia. Though criticized by a section of opinion as jingoistic, Pokhran II set off a much-needed US-India dialogue that finally culminated in the Manmohan-Bush nuclear deal. The rise of Islamic terrorism and Pakistan's failed adventure in Kargil quickened this. It clearly marked stepped up US intervention as Clinton gently underlined when he told India's parliamentarians on the role of American diplomacy in "urging Pakistanis to go back beyond the Line of Control" during the Kargil war."

105. "PRESIDENT OBAMA: LESSONS IN GRACE," editorial in the January 21 centrist English daily THE ASIAN AGE. "For Americans, history is not a burden to be dragged along but a path traveled, a lesson learnt and an unfolding story whose climax is to be full of hope ... The world may not agree with America and Americans at all times and on all issues, but in almost no other major country does one see the victor accept his laurels with such magnanimity and the vanquished the lesson of defeat with such grace. We in India pride ourselves on being the biggest democracy in the world: but here the victor revels and the vanquished sulks; and the celebrations often degenerate into taunts, muscle-flexing and bitterness. Why can't we ever see such grace in this country?"

106. "SO, CAN HE?" editorial in the January 21 pro-

NEW DELHI 00000128 003 OF 009

economic reform English daily THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS. "On the economy, Obama's task is two-fold. First, he has to continue with the Bush administration-initiated Tarp to rescue banks and other financial institutions. That should not be hard-Obama supported the plan and he has the personnel to implement it. He will, commendably, add a large fiscal stimulus to his economic package. As importantly, he must resist vested interests in the Democratic Party, which will try and push him towards protectionism-that path of erecting barriers can only lead to another Great Depression. Fortunately so far, at least in his Cabinet picks, he has shown independence from the left-wing of the Democratic Party. May that moderation continue in his policies towards trade and delicate matters like outsourcing ... His likely shift in focus to Pakistan and Afghanistan in the war on terror can only be a good thing-those are, after all, the real epicentres of global terror. India will hope that he would take a tough line on Pakistan-sponsored terror. However, we must hope that he (or anyone on his team) doesn't tread the David Miliband path by linking a resolution on Kashmir to terror emanating from Pakistan. Terror mustn't be given any cover to hide behind. Obviously, India will have to work hard to push this perspective."

107. "THE ECONOMY WILL MAKE OR BREAK OBAMA" editorial in the January 21, 2009 centrist English daily DNA. "... of all the compelling crises that compete for Obama's attention, there is one that, depending on his response to it and the degree of success he has in addressing it will eternally come to define his presidency, and will either make or break his term in office. That crisis is the one that confronts the US economy.... Just one piece of statistic is illustrative of this mess: US personal consumption expenditure was 72 per cent of GDP in 2006, the highest in economic history. To 'fix' the US economy now, Obama needs to do two unpopular things: first, he must persuade Americans, long used to the Good Life of consumption excess, to look up the word 'thrift' in the dictionary -- and live by it -- and get down to doing some work in the real world, not just in the parallel universe of paperless money.... But Obama's bigger challenge is to address the other half of the global imbalance -- by persuading Asian governments to introduce social safety nets and let their currencies appreciate, and encourage their people to stop exporting or saving, and instead start spending.... Obama has thus far proven himself to be a man of prodigious talent who thinks issues through. Yet, for all the intellectual capital he and his All-Star economic team possess, the Big Ideas he has formulated and the tremendous political goodwill he starts his term with, this is one challenge that may overwhelm him...."

108. "US VISTAS AND INDIAN REALITIES," analysis in the January 21 English Daily THE MINT. "There is speculation that Obama will select Holbrooke as a special envoy to

South Asia. No doubt, "alarmed" American eyes find his background in conflict resolution appealing, as he

NEW DELHI 00000128 004 OF 009

brokered the Dayton Accords on Bosnia. Yet Jammu and Kashmir is not the former Yugoslavia, and such a template would be deeply resented in India ... There has been much buzz lately about social entrepreneurship, but the private sector is indeed an essential ally to deliver public goods nimbly and efficiently. Government schools in rural India, for example, have notoriously terrible attainment rates. A glacial public sector cannot deliver alone where a voucher system can ... Public-private partnerships are imperative also for global problems such as climate change, which can be aided by technical expertise and research. No public sector can compete with the green-energy ventures coming out of Silicon Valley. The Asia Society report rightly urges Obama "to leverage the creativity and resourcefulness that exist outside both governments". This is certainly a step in the right direction."

¶09. "PRESIDENT OBAMA REACHES OUT TO MUSLIMS & HINDUS," front-page dispatch in January 21 centrist THE TELEGRAPH by Washington-based Diplomatic Editor K.P. Nayar. "...Obama stunned his nation by using his Muslim middle name, Hussein, for the oath of office... Obama's decision to use his Islamic middle name immediately struck a chord in Arab countries... Obama became the first President in U.S. history to acknowledge a Hindu America, a growing, increasingly influential and affluent segment of the immigrant population in the U.S.... Missing from the new President's agenda were unrealistic goals such as a U.S.-administered democratic panacea for the rest of the world that characterized the speeches of...George W. Bush. Instead, the 44th President promised a return to American values, which Bush was widely seen to have trampled upon...."

¶10. "HOPE IN DIFFERENCE," edit-page article in January 21 centrist THE TELEGRAPH by Diplomatic Editor K.P. Nayar. "...The final days of the Bush Administration will be remembered...as the end of a dark era that lasted eight years - the transfer of power from an occupant of the White House whom history will probably judge as the worst president of America... There will be...revelations in Washington in the coming weeks and months about how the Bush Administration, which sought a permanent Republican majority in the Congress and in the White House, subverted the law and the constitution and risked America's reputation as the world's oldest democracy. But Obama is unlikely to make the mistake...and engage in any witch-hunt against the previous administration. At least not for now... If the hundreds of thousands of Americans who have been singing, dancing and partying non-stop in Washington...saw yesterday's change of guard at the White House as the end of a long nightmare, in reality, it was cold comfort for Obama. He inherits a nightmare of a different kind that is already touching the lives of all Americans irrespective of their color, beliefs or material well-being: the economic meltdown...."

¶11. "VIEW FROM THE TOP," op-ed in January 21 centrist THE

NEW DELHI 00000128 005 OF 009

STATESMAN by N.D. Batra, Professor of Communications at Norwich University. "...The inauguration of the first black man to grace the White House, have characterized the emerging American dream. It is a dream of transcendence and self-renewal and it makes us wonder what President Barack Obama...will do now that his dream has come true. What America is going to be, what it does or does not do, under President Obama will have serious

repercussions for the world. No metaphor can capture its immensity but one might say that the USA is not only a moral force for freedom and equality but it is also the hub and the driving engine of global the economy. And to a great extent the USA is the single most important determinant of peace in many parts of the world. America's misfortunes do not necessarily mean blessings for other nations. Its decline and fall will not leverage others to rise. The whole world is watching whether Obama, having raised himself by his bootstraps and having transcended all the prejudices of race, religion and color, can prevent the U.S. and the world economy from sliding into the abyss of depression. This is the dream he might not have dreamt while aspiring for the White House...."

¶12. "OBAMA AND THE AMERICAN DREAM," op-ed article in January 20 DAINIK JAGRAN Hindi daily: "Barak Obama's becoming the U.S. president heralds the dawn of a new era as he is the first Afro-Americans to reach here. India is very interested in Obama because of his underprivileged, non-white background. Rights of the underprivileged and marginalized sections of society are a great concern in this country too. What is interesting is that black Obama was sponsored by the non-blacks. That is the beauty of the American society. Now it is time for the non-whites to live the American dream. In the U.S., 80 per cent white and 12 per cent of the population is black. What happens nowhere else -- only happens in America."

¶13. "OBAMA! THOUSANDS OF PROBLEMS WELCOME YOU", editorial in January 20 right-of-center Urdu daily "HAMARA SAMAJ", New Delhi: "By the grace of Almighty, human beings got rid of the ugliest and the most hot-headed American ruler, George Bush. It will need centuries altogether to heal the wounds inflicted by him on humanity. Today, America and the entire Europe are entrapped in the quagmire of a dreaded economic crisis, which created instability throughout the world. Even the super power, America is reeling under increased unemployment and poverty. The present chaos in America is neither an abrupt feature nor did American people make any undemocratic and unwanted decisions. Unfortunately, trampling the American people's opinion, Obama's predecessor, President Bush adopted the policy of venture, death and destruction like Hollywood stars and sent out American mariners to conquer the Muslim world by adopting aggressive and imperialistic policies. American people elected Obama and thus, sent a message that they still believe in supreme values of democracy and want the welfare of humanity. At present, issues like Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan are top of the complicated issues."

NEW DELHI 00000128 006 OF 009

Moreover, capitalism has turned most exploitative and there on uprising against it in Europe itself. Hoping Obama will bring uncontrolled capitalism under the purview of just and legitimate conditions."

¶14. "FROM MARTIN LUTHER KING TO OBAMA", editorial in January 20 right-of-center Urdu daily "INQUILAB", Mumbai: "Martin Luther King was a social reformer, famous as well as respected in America. He dedicated his life for restoration of civil and human rights. Martin Luther King was awarded Nobel Prize for Peace in 1964. Where, on one hand, Obama has the honor of being the first black President of America, on the other hand, people of two continents, America as well as Africa, are happy over his election. African Americans think that success of Obama is the end result of Martin King's efforts. Eminent personalities of Africa and America are considering Obama as the continuation of King's ideological journey. But it is possible only when Obama practices the human-friendly ideology which Martin Luther King had preached. He will have to keep the golden saying of King: The right delayed, the right denied, always in his mind. American



policies have deprived millions of people of their fundamental rights. Obama will have to remove those anti-human elements from these policies so that hatred against America throughout the world may deescalate. Obama should not forget that George Bush has left a lot of work for him to do."

¶15. "A NEW DAWN IN AMERICA", editorial in January 20 right-of-center Urdu daily "MUNSIF", Hyderabad: "Obama will have to face a number of complicated issues and challenges. No predecessors of Obama faced such a great number of internal and external problems. American economy was very strong in the recent past, which helped it to be the super power as well as superior to Russia during the era of cold war. But now American economy is reeling under a severe crisis. Obama, therefore, will have to concentrate on the internal issues of his country. On the external front, what change Obama can bring into Bush's oppressive, unjustified and Zionist-friendly policies, is an important question. It is because, like his predecessors, he is also under the control of Zionism. It is not easy for him to take action against Israel. If he, contrary to his predecessors, could do something in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, or else where against the vested interests of Israel, it will be considered as his revolutionary and historic initiative. But such expectations from him are nothing but living in fool's paradise."

¶16. "WELCOME OBAMA: THE NEW AGE OF LAUGHING BUDDHA" editorial in the January 21, 2009 multi-edition centrist Gujarati daily DIVYA BHASKAR. "The man, whom the entire world is watching with much hope, has finally officially assumed office of the President of the United States. The rise of Barack Obama to the highest civilian office is an indicator of sorts of his personality traits. He has this uncanny wit of connecting with people who possess diverse opinions. His smiling face beams a

NEW DELHI 00000128 007 OF 009

feeling of positivity that the world badly needs today than ever before.... Although the tasks and challenges before the new president are enormous, Obama has the audacity to take the bull by the horns.... Whatever may be the case, one thing is sure that this historic election has translated Martin Luther King's dream into a reality. Now Obama has the opportunity to write a new chapter in history."

¶17. "I HAVE A DREAM" editorial in January 21 left-of-center Marathi daily MAHARASHTRA TIMES. "To instill confidence in the American people in one of the darkest hours of American life is not an easy task. President Obama's inauguration speech has accomplished that task. Obama faces a bleak economic scene at home and elsewhere. Similarly, the terrorist and insurgent outfits, spread across the globe, have further jeopardized international peace and they continue to threaten the new president. One should note the fact that Mumbai terror attacks took place three weeks after Obama's election and Israel's attack on Gaza strip was three weeks before his swearing in. Is this just coincidence? Or is it a warning from terrorist outfits - as if these outfits want to see what kind of change will Obama bring in these uncertain times.."

¶18. "OBAMA LEANS TOWARDS..." editorial in January 21 centrist Marathi daily LOKMAT. "While welcoming Barack Obama as the 44th U.S. President, India should exercise vigilance towards Obama's foreign policy stance. With ideologues like the Chicago-based Rob Malley (who has a soft corner for Pakistan), one can imagine what kind of South Asia policy will Obama have? Malley is a propagandist and will try to veer Obama towards a lenient Pakistan policy. India has to be mindful of the lobbyists surrounding Obama."

¶19. "NOW AMERICA BELONGS TO OBAMA" editorial in January 21 centrist Marathi daily SAKAAL. "... One does not expect major foreign policy shifts in Obama administration. America's foreign policy has been essentially a geo-political expansionist strategy which gives first priority to the U.S. vested interests. That's precisely why Obama's assurance of withdrawal of forces from Iraq will not be an easy proposition. The rich oil reserves of Iraq and other parts of Middle East will remain central to many policies. Obama will not be able to overlook the U.S. economic interest in Iraq and Afghanistan. Similarly, the U.S. needs Pakistan to fight terrorism in Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Therefore, it won't be easy to dictate terms to the erring Pakistan...."

¶20. "OBAMA-HILLARY POSSESS GOODWILL, THEY CAN DO, BUT THEY WILL NEED TIME," front-page commentary in the January 21 left-of-center Kolkata Bengali daily SAMBAD PRATIDIN by former Indian Ambassador to the U.S. Siddhartha Shankar Roy. "People expect too many things from the new Obama Administration. First, the U.S. Administration will continue to become friendlier toward India; second, the U.S. will adopt certain economic

NEW DELHI 00000128 008 OF 009

measures that will also benefit India. Third, U.S. military aggressions in the Middle East including in Iraq, and in Afghanistan will stop and the U.S. foreign policy will change soon. I can clearly say that Obama and Hillary will want to change a lot of things. Maybe they will be successful to some extent. But they will not be able to do anything overnight. The Obama team will be ideally positive for the entire world. But they are not magicians. Let us be patient. People should give them time to deliver."

¶21. "OBAMA'S CHALLENGE," editorial in January 21 left-of-center Bengali daily SAMBAD PRATIDIN. "The world will monitor Obama's role in combating terrorism. The issue of Indo-U.S. relationship under the Obama regime will also be important. Regardless of Bush's flaws in several fronts, there is no denying of the fact that Indo-U.S. relationship has blossomed like never before during his tenure. The Indo-U.S. civil nuclear deal bears testimony to it. New Delhi must be anxious to see which way that relationship moves in the near future. We may hope that the relationship between the two countries will at least remain stable if it does not flourish more."

¶22. "OBAMA WILL MISS THE HONEYMOON," editorial in January 21 Chennai-based independent English daily THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS. "As Barack Hussein Obama enters the White House he might be tempted to reflect on the road he has traveled. It hasn't been an easy one and it's likely to get much harder, not simply because his victory as the first African-American President spells a revolutionary change in American politics. As the race went on, the times got worse and now, as he takes office, Obama probably won't even have the 100-day honeymoon US Presidents are traditionally expected to use for settling down in office. Even before he formally took over as the 44th president, newspaper headlines focused on an all-too short honeymoon. But Obama has moved in with huge expectations and, at the same time, apprehensions of how successfully and speedily he will ease the burdens the country is reeling under, at home as well as abroad. The near-collapse of the financial sector, spelling a loss of nearly three million jobs last year alone, together with the mess exported by the Bush regime provide extreme challenges for the new President... In addition, he has to pay attention to the Indo-US nuclear deal, Pakistan, Afghanistan and decide on his approach to Iran's congratulations..."

¶23. "CHALLENGES BEFORE OBAMA," editorial in January 21 Bangalore-based left-of-center Kannada daily PRAJAVANI. "In all likelihood, the US-India relations are expected to reach new heights during President Obama's regime. There is a possibility of continued military action in Afghanistan, which will affect the US ties with Pakistan. His statements with regard to Kashmir have created ripples in India though Indian leadership is confident of changing his stance on Kashmir. Any change in US policies with regard to outsourcing might affect

NEW DELHI 00000128 009 OF 009

the Indian IT sector adversely. The confusion in this regard might end soon. In spite of all these, Obama wants a better relationship with India and that is a very good sign."

¶24. "OBAMA TAKES OVER," editorial in January 21 Bangalore-based independent Kannada daily KANNADA PRABHA. "Obama's takeover signifies a great social revolution in the world. Obama might choose a path of restraint and cooperation instead of confrontation."

¶25. "BUSH'S MARKET VALUE," editorial in the January 21 CPI (M) Organ GANASHAKTI Bengali daily, Kolkata. "People in America and abroad had been awaiting Bush's exit from the White House. During his tenure Bush put a question mark on America instead of shoring up its image domestically and internationally. Now, Obama faces a great responsibility of addressing the issue of withdrawing American troops from Iraq and Afghanistan. American citizens as well as the world community will be eagerly watching for sometime to see what actions he takes on this. How Obama tackles the pressure from the U.S. war lobby remains to be seen. But what will happen to Bush? What will he do now? Will he take up a new job or will he write his autobiography? However, his personal equity seems to be so low that nobody wants to take a risk."

WHITE